
YEAR 12 ART – PRACTITIONERS STATEMENT

My work titled “Bloom of the Borderline” is a visual representation of the stages in my journey with mental illness, specifically Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). Methods to artistically express my experiences symbolically became my focus, leading me to study fields of interest such as Chernobyl. To incorporate a conceptual layer relative to my journey, I used nature as a metaphor due to nature’s ability to calm me. Wanting to represent various stages, a suite of work was suitable. I admired the aesthetic qualities of Chernobyl, and connected the reclamation of Chernobyl’s environment after the nuclear disaster to the process of my recovery; developing the concept of displaying the process of a leaf flowing through the wind and reinforcing the idea of my journey with BPD. A flowing leaf enabled me to create a smooth relationship that carries the viewer’s eye through each canvas, yet the placement of each leaf not too stark where the composition would be poor if the canvases were separated.

I was influenced by the incorporation of paper collage from artists such as Darlene Olivia McElroy, Eduardo Recife, and Sandra Duran Wilson. I felt that subtly incorporating collage into the backgrounds would strengthen the personal connection of each piece, hiding personal meaning within the work. I saw collage as an opportunity to include historical elements, representing the previous stages of recovery.

The strongest influence was Emma Lindstrom, whose ethereal approach at abstraction introduced me to acrylic pouring. I admired how the fluidity of her painting method and vivid colour schemes created emotive paintings heavy with movement through implied texture. I wanted to create my own style inspired by Emma’s acrylic pouring to evoke emotions relative to each stage, depending on the intensity of the lines and colour chosen.

Before the pouring process, I studied the psychology of colour to produce colour schemes that conveyed certain emotions. Colour was critical for creating aesthetic work that communicated my message. I sought opinions from teachers and peers to help decide on suitable colours. Adjustments of hue and tone were needed before I created successful colour schemes that connect by introducing a main colour into neighbouring paintings; creating a sense of harmony.

I developed my own technique of acrylic pouring that created the depth and detail I aimed to achieve, through experimentation, videos, and personally interviewing artist Mely.D. I encountered issues with bright colours clashing with the detail of the pour, affecting the focal point of the leaves. I decreased the saturation and added further colours to create subtle backgrounds with depth. I experimented with puddle pouring, but later used another technique: dirty pouring to create more interest. I explored a wide variety of mediums including photography to reinforce the idea of abandoned places. These photos lead me to incorporate an effect reminiscent of cells, adding personal connection by using the overgrowth of landmarks in my hometown as reference.

I created three-dimensional leaves, using various stages of oxidisation for each stage. Being inexperienced with metal, my teachers assisted me by offering suggestions regarding suitable metals and methods of forming structure and patinas.

Stage 1 symbolises myself untouched by mental illness and nature prior to destructive human behavior. I used a pastel colour scheme representing purity, consisting of yellow, peach and beige. These subtle colours evoke emotions of calmness, and my critics associated the neutral colours with purity. I collaged “Nearer my God to

thee” into the background; a soft hymn that relaxes me. From a 1931 magazine in my personal collection, it’s the oldest piece of collage used in my series. Such vintage elements emphasises the predeceasing stages. I created a shiny steel leaf untouched by any oxidization to further symbolise purity.

Stage 2 represents the onset of mental illness and the anxiety of dealing it. To symbolise the severity, I used an intense colour scheme consisting of dark purple, red and orange; associated with negative emotions, particularly anxiety. Collaged into the background are small Alice in Wonderland poems. As a reference to “going crazy” and the mad hatter, the poems represent emerging illness compared with the full pages used in the following stage. I created a slightly rusted leaf with minor decomposition; representing the onset of mental illness.

Stage 3 represents the crisis of a mental breakdown and human error; such as Chernobyl. To express melancholy, I used the bold colour scheme of dark blue, purple and grey. Having the darkest colours in the suite, it emphasises intensity. I collaged full Alice in Wonderland pages into the background as a metaphor for complete craziness. I created an entirely rusted and decomposed steel leaf, also symbolising crisis.

The last two stages both use colour schemes seen in nature; such as green, yellow and blue, to evoke positive emotions. A slight difference between colours include the use of grey in stage 4 to symbolising the underlying presence of mental illness. Stage 4 represents the therapeutic stages of recovery as well as the reclamation of nature. As a reference to recovery, I collaged my psychiatric medication box into the background. I also included a personal family item obtained after my crisis experience, maintaining relevancy to stage 4’s placement in the timeline of my journey with recovery. I reduced the rust and gilded copper leaf to the steel leaf to represent the beginning of recovery. Stage 5 represents full recovery and complete reclamation of nature. The calming colours are collaged with barely-visible library cards found in the source of my recovery; the art room. In relation to the gilded copper leaf, I created a beautiful leaf from copper to symbolise complete recovery. Patina has been used to represent the scars and memories the journey with mental illness leaves post-recovery.

I believe my series is a successful documentation of my personal journey that creates visual interest. However, to improve the stability of my work, I could’ve poured on wood rather than reinforcing each canvas. Further experimentation with collage would’ve allowed me to incorporate it further into my work, as much was lost during the pouring process.